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ORESTE POGGIOLINI



# AMERICA AT WAR

An address delivered on April 6, 1918  
in the rooms of the LYCEUM in Florence, Italy, translated into English by

CHAS. M. MEEHAN and RUFUS G. MATHER



The people of Rome solemnize in the Colosseum the anniversary of the entry into war of the U. S. of America.

*Published under the auspices of the  
SOCIETÀ D'INCORAGGIAMENTO DELLA SPEZIA  
and other friends of the United States.*

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## FOREWORD.

*The translators have thought it proper to write a brief preface by saying that Poggiolini's speech has contributed efficaciously to make clear to the most intelligent public in Italy the moral and effective importance of the American intervention in the War.*

*Indeed, this speech, delivered for the first time in Florence, for the anniversary of the entry into war of the United States, and repeated at Milan, Turin, Genoa, Venice, Siena, La Spezia, Parma and other important Italian cities, left everywhere a comforting impression of confidence and of the liveliest sympathy for the new and most powerful Ally.*

*At Turin there occurred an unusual and characteristic incident: a distinguished professor of the University of that city arose in the audience to thank the orator in the name of the listeners, expressing his pleasure and satisfaction that he (the orator) had illuminated with such efficacious clearness a problem concerning which not even the most intelligent minds had exact and definite ideas.*

*The Italian edition of this speech has been distributed broadly under the auspices of the **Assistenza e Resistenza Morale** of Orsanmichele, Florence, and circulated at the Italian Front through the initiative of the Commands of the First and Second Armies.*

*Finally, the translators think well of adding that they have gladly given the time and effort necessary to put this address into English, in the hope that by so doing they may help to win the War.*

CHARLES M. MEEHAN  
RUFUS G. MATHER

members of the American Red Cross in Italy, Florence Branch.



## AN APPEAL OF LLOYD GEORGE

While awaiting the gigantic offensive which the Germans were preparing on the Western Front and while the violent and fraudulent peace with Russia was being perpetrated - that peace which has been so shrewdly named the deformed child born of the monstrous union of anarchical frenzy and despotic militarism, we often find that we are asking ourselves: «Do the Americans really feel the War? Are they working seriously? And will their help reach us in time to be of use?

A few days ago this message from Lloyd George was given out to the public in America by the English Ambassador to the United States:

« We are at the crisis of the War. Attacked by an immense superiority of German troops, our Army has been forced to retire. The retirement has been carried out methodically before the pressure of a steady succession of fresh German reserves, which are suffering enormous losses.

« The situation is being faced with splendid courage and resolution. The dogged pluck of our troops has for the moment checked the careless onrush of the enemy, and the French have joined in the struggle; but this battle, the greatest and most momentous in the history of the world, is only just beginning. Throughout it the French and English are buoyed up with the knowledge that the great Republic of the West will neglect no effort which can hasten its troops and ships to Europe. In war, time is vital. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of getting American reinforcements across the Atlantic in the shortest possible space of time ».

The burning appeal which the English Prime Minister throws out to the American Republic cannot be considered to be a reproof. It is a cry for help, which has stimulated in a beneficent way the energetic fervor of the great federation already subjected to intense strain.

Germany has always boasted that she did not take seriously the help from across the ocean. But she was so much preoccupied about it that she has hurled her hordes into the assault and slaughter before it could have its complete development. The grave, the vital problem for the Entente is to resist while awaiting the cooperation of America. It is therefore opportune to speak to-day of the American intervention a year after the entry into the War of the United States; to define the moral reasons for it and to judge rightly of their work.

It is also timely so to do, because the American intervention is undervalued by internal enemies here, who follow the orders of the Central Powers with the faithfulness of paid hirelings. And it is also undervalued, and perhaps in good faith, by the pessimists, who, because of pessimism, did not believe it to be likely, but declared it to be most efficacious when actually they judged it to be either impossible or remote.

Let us say, first of all, to be sincere and truthful, that until it became an accomplished fact, very few, practically no one, believed in the intervention of the United States in the European conflict. The long period consumed in sending messages caused us to lose faith. Our ever ready irony, which often makes us hasty and unjust, had ample field to exercise itself behind the back of the President, who was always putting off until the next time what was to be the supreme decision. We shall have further opportunity of speaking of the *famous* notes; meanwhile it is only just that we render homage and recognition to him who was the forerunner and first apostle of the American intervention - to Theodore Roosevelt.

### ROOSEVELT' S CAMPAIGN

Theodore Roosevelt did not await the maturing of public opinion, but was the first to help to shape it. Proud and audacious, he thundered against Germany in



public speeches and in articles in the most widely circulated magazines two years before America had made the grave decision. In his speeches one finds forceful fearlessness and extraordinary foresight.

The Pacifists, headed and backed up by the German element, were working to the utmost to put the conscience of the public to sleep. One of their topical songs which had enjoyed a certain popularity ran thus: « I did not raise my boy to be a soldier ». Against these were the thunder-bolts of the Ex-President especially directed. He countered with the spirited words of Abraham Lincoln: « Eternal shame on those of us who rather than consent to war would be reconciled to see the nation perish ».

And he further held that the triumph of pacifistic theories would expose the United States to the danger of perishing.

The Americans, he said, have sinned against moral law and religion, in abstaining from protesting against the invasion of Belgium, and against the other crimes committed by German lawlessness. « Neutrality does not involve indifference of heart, and never should a right-minded person consent to remain passive between right and wrong ». When the Saviour saw the money-changers installed in the Temple, he did not hesitate for an instant to break the peace and to proceed to their expulsion. Peace was not holy at that moment for the Redeemer of men, but holy were the lashes which drove the dealers away.

From the first day and for a long time alone amongst the people of authority of his country, Theodore Roosevelt had demanded the diplomatic intervention of the United States in favor of Belgium.

The premeditated crime of the *Lusitania* had filled him with noble indignation. In it he saw the brutal application of the program with which Germany intended to win, by sowing terror on apprehensive and timorous

souls. And he called « a crowd of cowards » those who held that America would have been wrong in acting in regard to the *Lusitania* « people terrorized by clamorous German criminality ».

In regard to Belgium, he did not dwell as much on the iniquities which the press of the Allies was revealing to the world as on the cynical confessions themselves of the German papers. He cites a characteristic example : « The imposts which we exact from Belgium » - they were printed in Germany, -> would represent the extreme limit of the financial capacity of that country, which has already been obliged *naturally* to indemnify us for all the expenses it has cost us ».

There is an important revelation, which is due to him, which is little known in Europe : The Pacifists, following the German theme, endeavoured to say that the United States, to be strictly neutral, should forbid the exportation of arms and munitions to Europe. But he recalled one of the Articles of the Convention of the Hague - another scrap of paper torn to bits - which stipulated the absolute right of all neutral countries to furnish the troops of the belligerent nations with arms and munitions.

And he further made known that this same faculty which then inconvenienced Germany had been precisely the thing wanted, by Germany herself, who not a long time before, had proposed and supported its introduction into the Articles and had had it accepted in the Hague Convention.

In meeting the clever but specious argument, which was apparently sound but actually was made with intent to deceive, that the United States must not, under any circumstances, enter the War because to them was reserved the honour of being the pacifying arbitrators of the enormous conflict, he opposed with much political acumen the argument that one never has recourse to the arbitration of a people which one is accustomed to hold

in scorn when this scorn has been deserved because of its cowardliness.

The fear that the American citizens of German extraction could constitute a serious danger of national scism did not preoccupy him: «The Americans of German extraction», he said, «constitute one of the principal elements of the population of the United States, and I persist in believing that the immense majority of them are at heart profoundly and exclusively American. I myself, for example, am in part of German origin, and of those drops of German blood which run in my veins I am not less proud than of the other ethnical currents which are mingled with them. But with all this I have the consciousness of being nothing else than an American.

For Wilson he had very harsh words. It was said with striking comparison that he thundered against him as Cicero had thundered against Catiline in Rome.

This heated propaganda of Theodore Roosevelt seemed for a time to accomplish nothing. People wished to see in the Ex-President nothing else but an ambitious impatient man, eager to regain power. A part of the American public has never been able to forgive his having desired to abandon the tradition created by Washington and Jefferson, and always scrupulously adhered to, according to which he who has twice been elected President should not aspire to a third consecutive term, although there was, to relieve his conscience, the fact that half of his first term was filled by him as Vice-President and that he, after his second term, did not at once present himself again, out of respect to the tradition. But the African hunting expeditions, which were a rest from presidential duty, and his triumphal return, through European honours, had, strange to say, in a country which is the favored field of spectacular advertisement produced on a notable part of the masses a certain sense of repulsion, by giving credence to the opinion that he aspired to American dictatorship. His having fought the

reelection of his ex-friend, Taft, confirmed this opinion, and, on account of the split which occurred in the Republican party, made reasonably easy the success of Wilson two years before the European conflict broke out.

Hence it seemed that the Roosevelt campaign was to fail completely. The country appeared to be absorbed and intent only on accumulating dollars at the expense of the discords in Europe. But events were working to make his doctrine triumph, and Germany with her pertinacity was working for it, she who with her obstinate provoking of America has fortunately counterbalanced many, if not all, of the serious errors of coordination, slowness and lack of foresight, which weigh heavily on the shoulders of the Entente.

Germany has acted in America in the same manner as she has in Italy. The agents of her corrupting propaganda were at work over there, openly or secretly, as with us to obtain, at all cost, a neutrality, even a humiliating one; while the behaviour of Berlin and the ostentatious and obstinate outburst of cruelty were rendering this untiring work futile and useless by revolting the opinion and conscience of the public.

## WILSON AND HIS NOTES

We come to Wilson and his notes.

It is not necessary to comment at length on the note-writing period, because everyone remembers it well, all having had an opportunity of exercising our sarcasm on them. There was a moment in which America and her President seemed destined to become the by-word of the world.

The ironically inclined and caricaturists had every opportunity of poking fun at her behind her back. We are in a position to-day to judge her conduct with equity, that is, after America has entered the bloody fray with decision equal to her fervor.

But, before arriving at the ultimate decision, what mental suffering and secret anxiety! What justifiable hesitation, which, in the eyes of the world, could seem to be only proofs of weakness, if not actual sordid calculation, but which were instead only the manifestation of a grave crisis in the conscience of the President, and a corresponding and not less grave and painful one in the national conscience!

How was it possible at one fell stroke to renounce the policy, now more than a century old, which had been outlined by the revered forefathers of American independence and which had borne such plentiful fruit? How could one forget the political "Last Will and Testament," of George Washington, expressed in his Farewell Speech of Sept. 17, 1797, in which it was said that America should never jeopardize her peace and prosperity in the nets woven by the rivalries, interests, combinations or differences of Europe? How could one fail to remember that twenty-five years later this political address had been solemnly reaffirmed by James Monroe in order to erect on it the foundation of his famous Doctrine, that Europe must never again meddle in American affairs? How could one fail to recognize that the direct and profitable consequence of this policy had been actually the tremendous development obtained in every field of the American Federation during so many years of peace, which had not been burdened by costly and ponderous armaments? And how was it possible to sharply reverse the engine for the purpose of following a course diametrically opposite?

Would the country have seriously responded then to a decision which would have seemed hasty and immature, the country so unready materially, and still less prepared morally? Or, would not the adverse and disintegrating forces have had free rein, pushed and guided by those Germans whom America had fattened but not yet absorbed, aided in no small measure by those Euro-

pean races which had emigrated because of political or religious persecution, and which cannot forget their hatred of the governments of their respective countries?

Serious, unknown quantities these, which would have perplexed any man of state, conscious of his own immense responsibilities.

Public opinion, it is true, was being modified little by little. Roosevelt stood no longer alone. Nevertheless, the great majority of intelligent people undoubtedly desired that nothing should be left untried before going to extremes.

And, in truth, we needed only German stubbornness to push to extreme action a nation whom fortunate events had shaped into the most peace loving and mercantile one of the globe.

The United States had at once protested when, in February 1915, Germany had enjoined all neutral ships, as also those of the belligerent nations, to avoid the waters surrounding the British Isles, which she considered to be a war zone or to enter them at their risk and peril. To these protests Germany had replied by carrying out her threat. The protests had been renewed, and the American Government, not to be too exacting, had limited itself to express the hope "that at least the dangers which threatened neutral ships, should be reduced to the minimum in the instructions imparted to the commanders of the submarines ,,"

A modest and reasonable request, which ought to have been satisfied. And Germany promised. But the commanders of the submarines, after a certain time had transpired since the promises, torpedoed without reserve, without regard and without warning. New protests, couched in varying tone from America, and new lying assurances from the German Government. Meanwhile the *Lusitania* had been torpedoed, also the *Ancona*, the *Arabic*, the *Persia*, the *Sussex* and others besides. The number of innocent victims was increasing. Notes were

pouring down, and the world was laughing, not knowing whether or not high comedy was being played, and if so by which side.

It seemed at a certain point that the cup was full to overflowing. Public opinion in America, from the first side-tracked and absorbed by the enormous mass of excellent business with which the War had overwhelmed the country, was now being bitterly waked up. One does not live by gold alone. Rather, gold can be a source of danger and harm when it is an end to itself. A considerable number of prominent Americans had published an address hostile to Germany, or, to be more exact, to her Government, and among the signatures collected from every field of activity, more than two hundred professors of American universities figured, a fact doubly significant and important, because a country unless it be in the hands of the feeble-minded, begins to stir when the schools begin to stir, and also because the American universities had deeply imbibed German culture and methods.

On the 19th of April, 1916, President Wilson, summing up before Congress the laborious, preceding events of the grave question, announced that he had cried Halt!

« Unless the German Government does not immediately declare and effectuate the abandonment of its present methods of war against the ships which carry passengers and merchandise, the Government will have no other alternative than to break entirely diplomatic negotiations with the Government of the German Empire. »

This necessitated an explicit reply. Lucifer must either rebel or lower his head. However, Germany succeeded in not being explicit.

In May 4, the Germanic Government communicated to the Government of the United States that it had given instructions to the German ships that mercantile steamers should not be sunk without warning and without saving human lives, except in case that they at-

tempted to escape or had offered resistance. But, at the same time, that Government demanded that the United States should impose on England the cessation of the maritime blockade, and the Germanic note ended thus :

«In the event that the steps taken by of the Government of the United States should not lead to the success desired, and to making the law of humanity in all the belligerent nations avail, the German Government would find itself facing a new situation. »

It was evident that it intended to leave the door open for itself for a possible renewal of the campaign without mercy. The American Government replied drily that it took note of the promise, but that the rest did not concern it, as it could not « even for a moment admit, and, even less, discuss, the idea that the observance of the rights of American citizens on the sea on the part of the German maritime authorities depended in any manner whatever and however on the conduct of another Government in respect to the rights of neutrals and non-combatants ».

And the matter rested there. The German Government, by obtaining the American postponement, was gaining time and President Wilson was acquiring the relative tranquillity which he needed in order to face the electoral contest of November, which was approaching with long steps, and in which he found that he must meet a man of high moral character: the Republican Hughes, a partisan with Roosevelt of a haughtier and more combative policy.

But why had Germany sought to gain time? We have the brutal confession in the discourse of the German Chancellor of Feb. 1, 1917, when he announced the new campaign of submarines without mercy.

In May and in the preceding September he had been contrary to such campaign: now he was no longer so, and explained the reason for it. Here are the textual words; « The question in the opinion of the political and



military directing authorities was not mature. What change has taken place in it? Already the number of submarines has changed essentially in comparison with that of last year. »

The case is clear: Germany was not ready for a campaign without mercy, and had momentarily to yield. But she was waiting for the right moment to return to the assault.

This announcement of the renewed campaign of the submarines, from which Germany expected in less than six months the starvation and defeat of England and of her Allies, surprised the President, it may be said, at the very beginning of his noble attempts for a world peace, which he desired might happen on just and reasonable bases. In December 18, 1916, that is a few weeks before, there had been his note, in which he had asked the belligerents to declare explicitly the conditions on which they would consider it possible to reach peace, and to which the Central Powers had replied purely and simply that they were disposed to come together in a conference to discuss the conditions of peace, while the powers of the Entente had replied in a reasonably precise manner, expressing their reasons and the ends of the war which had been imposed on them.

The President did not despair; rather, he had declared to Congress on the 22nd of January that, to arrive at an agreement, there would have to be a peace without victory.

Germany, eight days later, decided to make him change his opinion. One must not forget that, in the declaration of the intensified campaign, there had been traced a completely new and vast series of marine blockaded zones, interrupted by passage-ways through which Germany gave neutral shipping permission to pass, but on days which she established, and with the stipulated obligation of landing at ports designated by her.

America, which had but one weekly line of passen-

ger ships between New York and England, would have had to submit to the imposition of landing her ships at Plymouth instead of at Liverpool.

It was, therefore, necessary either to act or accept the orders of the Master of Berlin; either to rebel or to dishonor oneself by recognizing oneself to be faint-hearted. On the third of February President Wilson announced to Congress that he had taken the only road which safeguarded the interests and decorum of the Nation: he had broken diplomatic relations with Germany and had given passports to her Ambassador.

On the 26th of the same month he asked for Congress the means for an armed neutrality in defense of humanity. But in this message also he let it be understood how much it cost him to see his country dragged into the War: « It must ardently be hoped », he said, « that it will not be necessary to put armed force into action. The American people do not wish it. Our wishes do not differ from theirs ». While he was speaking the *Laconia* was torpedoed without warning. Two American ladies died in a life-boat. Other acts deliberately hostile occurred in March. War was inevitable.

We are assured that, to prepare his war message, the President, sat up all night for a scrupulous examination of conscience, typing the memorable discourse with his own hands. During that solemn night all the past events of the patient, sustained strife certainly were clarified in his mind, preoccupied but calm. But certainly in no way could he reprove himself for what could be called anger and precipitation. Every scruple had been observed. The great patience used could only reinforce the firmness of his decision. Demonstrated patience now became his strength. His words were about to raise him to a historic triad, personifying three periods of purely American glory: Washington-independence; Lincoln-abolition of negro slavery; Wilson-revolution against the voracious brutality of conquest.

## THE PROMISES OF THE MESSAGE

What has America done and what is she doing? It is necessary to recall two really vigorous portions of that message of the 2nd of April, 1917:

« Germany — Wilson proclaimed — has rejected all the principles of international right by invoking necessity as a pretext, and has in this way occasioned immense material damage and, above all, the death of numerous non-combatants. The submarine campaign of Germany is directed against humanity and against all nations ».

The conviction which the President could now freely express was the same which had already penetrated into the most enlightened consciences of the country, that is, that the German Government not only did not feel any real friendship towards the United States, but even aimed to disturb her safety; a truth which was proved after the discovery and official divulging of the sinister intrigues by which the German Government had attempted in vain to associate Mexico and Japan in a joint action against the United States, while America desired nothing else than to be the good mediator of the great conflict. The President could therefore speak aloud in the name of his people: « We accept this defiance and battle with the natural enemy of Liberty. In it we shall employ the entire force of the Nation. We shall sacrifice our life, our fortune, all that we possess for such duty, with the pride of knowing that the day has finally arrived in which America can give her own blood for those same principles from which she was born, and, at the same time, for the felicity and peace which she has been able to enjoy. »

How is America fulfilling this her solemn pledge?

## THE ECONOMIC POTENTIALITY OF THE UNITED STATES

To have an idea of what the United States can do for the common cause it is necessary to have clearly in mind the figures which represent her potentiality.

Her population at the end of 1916 had almost reached 102 millions of inhabitants; her total wealth was valued at more than 1.000 billions of lire. These are figures which indicate immense progress when one thinks that in the middle of the last century, in 1850, the inhabitants of the United States were 23 millions, and her national wealth was limited to about 36 billions of lire. These are figures which would seem to be fantastic if the War had not accustomed us to treat millions lightly, and had not familiarized us with billions. These are figures which explain by themselves the long hesitation of America to accustom herself to the idea of facing a war.

The banking potentiality at the end of 1917, that is to say, the total of capital and banking reserves, of deposits in the banks, of securities realized by them, was ascertained to be 195 billions of lire, of which 16 billions were in gold.

During these last three years the commercial balance in favor of the United States, or the difference between the merchandise exported and that imported, showed a figure greater than 40 billions, which represents in large part the enrichment which America had made at the expense of belligerent Europe, and which were employed by her: more than half of this sum was represented by the redemption of her industrial securities which were placed abroad before the War, and the rest by bank loans to Europe, outside of those made by the State, and by the importation of more than 5 billions of lire in gold.

The value of the crops of 1916 had surpassed 50 billions of Lire, the productions of steel had reached 75

millions of tons: the industrial establishments were 268 thousand in number.

On this truly formidable basis of economic strength and industrial potentiality, the United States have been able to lay their war plans.

And these plans have been outlined on the magnificent scale which is peculiar to the initiatives on the other side of the ocean.

### THE FINANCIAL SIDE

The financial side above all. As a first war credit the sum of 17 billions of lire was asked from Congress, which was a few weeks after carried to 35 billions. At the end of 1917 the total issue of war loans had reached 55 billions of lire. A new loan for about 40 billions has been voted during these days, and they are already speaking of the organization of the greatest financial campaign of the United States, for the purpose of collecting 144 billions of Lire.

America has spent for the war, for her own account up to the end of 1917, about 39 billions of Lire. She has estimated that she will spend several billions per month during 1918. The loans granted to the Allies up to the 19. th of March amounted to a total sum of more than 25 billions of Lire.

It cannot truly be said that America has hesitated in assuming the financial burden, and this side of the problem would be sufficient to demonstrate her intervention for the cause of the Allies to have been highly useful.

### THE MILITARY SIDE

In developing the military program, the rapidity with which the financial part was carried out was not possible. America did not have a large army; she has

had to take measures to create it. And once she had accepted the idea of the necessity of the War, the crisis of uncertainty regarding the opportuneness of the volunteer system or conscription has been very brief and rapidly overcome.

When excellent and jovial President Taft, in the last weeks of his presidential career, that is, in February, 1913, was wrestling with the intermittent Mexican disturbances, and considered an armed intervention indispensable, he had an exact count made of the Federal troops available.

It resulted that there were disposable for immediate action against Mexico only 47,000 men. This insignificant figure, in addition to the considerations of political opportuneness, suggested to the outgoing President that he leave the Mexican disturbances unprejudiced for his successor, Wilson, for whom Destiny was reserving quite different grave anxieties.

The figures recently revealed by the Secretary of War, Baker, tell us that on the first of April, 1917, that is, on the eve of the entry into War of America, between the Regular Army, National Guard and the Reserve, the American Army was composed of 9,524 officers and 202,510 men - for former times an army of discreet size; for the present ones, miserably inadequate.

On the 31st of December, 1917, always according to the official figures, the American Army had reached the figure of 1,428,650 men, that is to say, seven times the initial number in the course of only 9 months. Another 800,000 will be called to arms during April.

During the first months after the declaration of war of the United States, that is, when the first prognostications were being made and they were discussing as to the most rapid and most useful way of helping the Allies to fight Germany efficaciously, it was said and printed that America would be able to send to France within the year from 50 to 100,000 men. We do not know

exactly how many Americans have to-day arrived in France, but we know from the official statement that up to the 31st of December there was a number *much greater* than the 100.000, which was the maximum fixed by the most optimistic estimates. We know through recent declarations of the First Secretary of the English Embassy at Rome, Capel Cure, that every day American troops are disembarking in the ports of France, and every day cannon and munitions in enormous quantities.

They spoke in those same forecasts of 500.000 men who could be sent during the year 1918, and we know now that 500.000 will already have been disembarked in France during the spring, and that the desire is to reach, and it will be reached during the year, one million and a half of soldiers, that is, a figure which trebles the most optimistic estimates.

And one has an idea of the kind of equipment with which America fits out her soldiers from the figure of tonnage which is asked for each soldier: 5 tons. Which means that for the entire transport 7.500.000 tons will be needed.

It is not, therefore, true, rather it is evidently contrary to the truth, that America had promised, or allowed it to be hoped, that millions of men would be promptly sent. It would have been unlikely and absurd. She has not yet sent the number which her and our impatience would have desired, but she has sent and is sending a number considerably greater than that promised and than that which could reasonably be hoped for (1).

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(1) On the day when this address was delivered the figures for the Americans, who had arrived in Europe, were not yet known. Actually the grandiose effort of America was beginning then. Three months later she was able to announce that she had disembarked in France more than a millions soldiers.

While this translation in on the press, the Americans have already to their credit the magnificent conduct of their troupes, who, together with the allies, have crushed the great German offensive by constraining the Germans to beat a retreat.

## AVIATION

Great help is expected from America for aviation. In a program outlined last summer by Capt. Lagrange of the French Aviation Service, and with which the official bulletin of the United States has had to occupy itself by referring to it freely, they spoke of the construction of 22,000 air-planes and 46,000 motors, of which 5,000 air-planes and 10,000 motors should have been ready in the spring.

Also, in this field we have not exact and official figures as regards the number of air-planes constructed and to be constructed. But we know that on the eve of war there were 1185 American aviators, including officers, and that up to January 1, 1918, they had reached the figure of 83,240. We know, again, that a new bill foresees an expenditure for naval aviation of 1 billion and 504 millions of lire. These data make us certain that attention and impulse have been given to the problem of aviation, and that it is on the right road to be solved by American broadness of view.

In aviation America avails herself considerably of Italian instructors, who are highly appreciated.

## THE PROBLEM OF SHIPPING

The problem of shipping worries and chafes American minds as well as those of all the Allies. It is the problem on which the others depend in great part.

America had perceived from the beginning of the period of her neutrality that she was, as regards mercantile shipping, in a mortifying condition. The man element, which brings energy and impulse to her great undertakings, was and is nourished by the bold and adventurous men who had left our continent to make for themselves on the other side of the ocean either a position or a fortune. They were not and are not in a great majority



seafaring men: therefore, maritime tradition was lacking. Furthermore, she had demanded that obligatory wages should be established for her officers and crews, such as had put her in a condition of inferiority in world competition. Finally, she had lacked the opportunity of seeing all the necessity of the problem because foreign flags were flocking to her ports to load her merchandise and her travelers. But, as a result, and in consequence of the War, the sea-faring conscience has arisen from necessity. America has set herself vigorously about the great work.

Before the Maritime League, the first president of the Shipping Board, Mr. Hurley, declared a few days ago:

« We were not a maritime nation. Our banner had almost disappeared from the seas, and maritime constructions had almost become a lost art with us ».

And he added:

« The new industry which the United States have created makes of this nation the greatest maritime country in the history of the world. Germany has needed forty years to construct her military machine; in less than eight months the United States have built their machinery for naval construction which, when it will give its full returns, will conquer the German military machine ».

And from the official figures given to us by this same Hurley, we know that since her entry into war, America, which had 61 yards for naval construction, both in wood and in steel, has carried them to 148; and that the number of ship ways of these yards has been carried from 235 to 730, with an increase of 495 ship ways.

With this increase the United States possess to-day 521 ship ways more than England herself.

The shipping contracted for up to the first of March was 8,205,708 gross tons, of which 2,121,568 already launched and 655,456 already in service. To the shipping available they have been able to add 112 first-class German and Austrian ships, sequestered in American ports, for a total of about 800,000 tons, which had been da-

maged and which have been repaired with the greatest speed.

It is, moreover, known that during last January 122,000 tons have been launched in America, that both during February and March a figure double that of January had been realized, that is, from 240 to 250,000 tons per month; which means that the work in great series, industrially and modernly organized, has surpassed the initial period and is beginning now to give its return.

As a particular worthy of note there is this; America has been able to succeed in constructing a ship of 8800 tons in only 64 days.

These are not negligible figures, when one considers that the total deficit of the shipping of the Allies and neutrals, according to what has been ascertained from an English « White Book » of recent publication, has been, from the beginning of the War up to the end to December, 1917. 2,632,297 tons.

This effort aims certainly at the after-war period. The correspondents of the neutral and allied press, who, during the last days of February have visited the great yards for maritime construction have carried away the conviction that the American construction is no longer limited only to substituting the tonnage which has been destroyed, but is assuming the proportions of a real naval offensive.

Torpedo boats are being constructed more rapidly than Germany can build submarines: a great number of scouting boats and submarine chasers is being built and with great speed. New means for discovering the presence of submarines are making continual progress.

The correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* pointed out that on Hog Island (now re-baptized Victory Island) which lies a few miles from Philadelphia, there is being built the greatest naval yard in the world, destined, when it shall be in a full state of efficiency, to assemble

simultaneously 120 ships, from parts which more than a thousand factories scattered along the coast of the Atlantic will supply to it, by means of a specially constructed railroad system which has the development of eighty kilometers. The 120 ships should be launched in the course of eight and a half months, beginning from November, 1918.

The gigantic organization of such a work could be done only by a great people, which with great means has resolved to reach a most lofty goal.

### OTHER PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES

And to reach this very lofty goal America has had, and has, to face in every field the solution of grave problems, sometimes unforeseen.

She has applied herself with fervor to medical relief and we have had an eloquent proof of the generous zeal of the American Red Cross during the weeks which followed our disaster of Caporetto. The American contribution was truly precious because of the help given to the refugees of the invaded regions.

She has assumed at her own expense, and with her own material, the reconstruction and expansion of the railroad lines in France over a distance of more than one thousand kilometers creating new self-governing lines where it was necessary, and constructing immense docks for the disembarkment of her soldiers and war materials.

She has made provision for the interest on the debts contracted by exceedingly heavy taxation, which falls on anyone possessing property, and not only surplus profits derived from the War, but also those of all the other organizations and industries extraneous to the War, by a rate which goes on a progressive scale from 20 to 60 % on the profits which surpass 9 % of the capital actually invested.

She has imposed limitations on the consumption of foodstuffs, especially on meat and cereals; in the case of

these latter, in the proportion of 30 %, and she is now endeavoring to reach a limitation of 50 % for wheat. Without these limitations, let us recall and recall it to the minds of the snobs of scepticism, who persist in their incurable fatuity of smiling at America and her aid, *without such limitations we would not have bread for our population.*

Have the Americans not encountered serious difficulties on their road? Is it all as easy for them as some may believe?

The difficulties to be conquered have presented themselves, and with such seriousness that they would have discouraged anyone who was not tempered for the contest as they are.

Difficulty of arousing above all the torpor of a certain class of capitalists and bankers, sympathizing with Germany, which was one of the indications of the serious, timorous inertia of the first days, and which the Secretary of the Treasury overcame, by going in person to unstop the ears of those who wished to close them, in the most obstinate centers, such as Chicago, and pointing out the right road to our worthy Nitti.

Difficulty of reaching the desired quantity in the supplies of coal, notwithstanding the fact that they have coal at home in abundance, and this principally because of the scarcity which was known to exist in railroad material.

Difficulties always growing worse in internal transportation, which had brought about moments of crisis even prior to the declaration of War, and were due, in addition to the insufficiency of the number of cars, to the enormous deposits which had accumulated in the Atlantic ports, encumbered and overcrowded with material which could not take the sea on account of the scarcity of tonnage.

Most acute difficulties in labour, because of the demand exceeding the supply, and because of the controver-

sies of labour, which arose between the 7th of April and last January, about 3,000 in number. Three thousand strikes would not be a great matter where to-day exist almost three hundred thousand industrial concerns; they would represent only 1 %. But the trouble is that they manifested themselves actually in the great war industries, where delays were undesired, because of revisions of salaries, which the special work and changed conditions in the cost of living were imposing. The question of labour, which was tending in the autumn to grow more intense with great danger to the war preparations, entered into a phase of adjustment after President Wilson eloquently and in person, made an appeal to the American Federation of Labor, convened at Buffalo, and obtained satisfactory results from it. As a first reply to his noble appeal, seven thousand strikers in Newark returned obediently to their posts, notwithstanding the fact that in that gathering the work of the pro-German Socialists had been most active. During these last days the newspapers have pointed out to us that the American labouring class is replying with splendid spontaneity to the call of duty, and is absolutely unanimous in supporting the policy of Samuel Gompers, President of the Federation, which can be summed up thus: « First win the War and then talk ».

Difficulties and obstacles due to the still imperfect functioning of an organization scarcely created, to lawlessness and painful surprises, which here and there have been verified, to warehouses which have burned up, or establishments which have been blown up, since, if a large part of the four millions of population of German origin, and of the other three millions of population of the countries allied to the Germans, feel now that their interests would have everything to lose in a humiliated and conquered America, and maintain a dutiful reserve if nothing else, there is a part, smaller in number but active and insidious, which is working under cover in

the service of the scientific espionage, for which their country of origin is celebrated.

### AMERICA'S GREAT STRENGTH: OPTIMISM

But everything over there is now being overcome and by virtue of the great strength in which the American people abounds: by virtue and merit of its optimism, constructive, speedy, fighting optimism, which is always inseparable from sound energy, and which never allows itself to be beaten down, but instead finds in obstacles an incitement and spur. The optimism of America has been the balsam for her great crises, the leaven which has prepared all her spiritual uplifts. If the maxim is true, that the perverse and the ordinary seek evil in good, and the good and the great, good in evil, the American people is great principally because of its great optimism. He errs who believes that it is the effect of the good luck of the Americans and of the favored conditions of their land, rich in every natural richness. The same land was for centuries in the hands of the Red Skins, and was almost sterile. It was optimism and energy which made it of value.

What strength, what wonderful and enormous strength and how much we must regret that we do not possess as much of it!

If working optimism had aided us all in every phase of our War; if we had worked with calmness instead of criticising, if we had not been desperately intent on small things and had not indulged in so many foolish laments and enervating, useless sighs; if we had not lost ourselves by throwing biting acid and distrust over everything; if we had not too often allowed our fantasy to run with free rein in the dark woods of discouragement - if, in a word, we had been in this respect a little American, the atmosphere which produced Caporetto would certainly never have been created and prepared.

## THE THREE PHASES OF THE AMERICAN MIND

I have lived for nine years in the United States, and I believed that I knew the qualities of that people well enough. I must, however declare and recognize that the great soul of that nation has been revealed to me by the War.

And I recall, since I have had the occasion to return there twice, after having left it some months after the beginning of the European conflict, I recall exactly three very characteristic phases of the American state of mind.

The outbreak of the European War brought on a first phase of great public curiosity and painful uncertainty in business. People crowded every day in front of the huge geographical maps, on which the great newspapers were showing the initial vicissitudes of the conflict on the basis of telegraphic information, as it crowds ordinarily in front of the bulletin boards which tell the baseball results. It was another and more clamorous baseball which was being played in Europe, and on which one could lay a wager and gamble as on the other. In business, however, a depression, caused by the many commercial threads which the war had unexpectedly broken, was verified. The stock exchanges had been closed to avoid a panic in the market.

In the autumn of 1915, when I was again over there for some months, business was flourishing. But the market was, or seemed to be, too much the prey of speculation. It was, in short, the « business » phase - money, money and money ; it appeared that nothing else must occupy the mind. The national conscience had not yet had its superb and complete awakening, although it did not keep silent ; and an evident sign of it, in addition to the writings in the magazines and newspapers, partisans of a much more vigorous, fighting policy, was the exhibits of projectiles and relics of the European War which were exposed, together with posters, photographs

and suggestive designs, in various shops, especially rented by a committee for the organization of national defense, tending to recall what awaits him who allows himself to be surprised, unprepared, by the brutal appetites of others.

During that phase, which was certainly the least clear, everything caused one to doubt whether the great market had been open not only for the purchase of munitions, arms and food supplies, but, above all, of minds and consciences. One spoke openly of the intrigues of the Germans and their partisans, it was said that the German-American bankers had already laid aside 200 millions of Lire to be spent in the presidential campaign of the coming year in behalf of and for the advantage of the candidate who would pledge himself not to enter into war against Germany. The Germans made no great mystery of their attempts at corruption.

A dubious phase, a little cloudy, the memory of which only the third could cancel.

Of the change of mind in the American masses I had the first hint in England, just as I was embarking again for America in the early days of February, 1917. During those days one spoke in the world only of the note of Germany which announced the submarine campaign without mercy.

At the London agency of American steamers, where I went to inform myself if by chance the German note had brought about a variation or a suspension in the departures, they replied to me with haughtiness: - « Do you think that the United States can accept the orders of the Kaiser? The ship will leave on the day and on the hour fixed, and the same will happen in the following weeks ».

And the Transatlantic liner « New York » of the American Line left on the third of February with flag flying. Twenty-four hours after her departure the news came to us that Wilson had given passports to the German Ambassador. From that moment our voyage be-



came dangerous and stirring. But the flag was not taken in. At night we travelled with all lights lit. The star-spangled banner, on which the searchlight on board was darting its luminous rays, waived gaily, as if to defy darkness and destiny.

At New York we found a great ferment. War was considered inevitable, even by many of those who had always deprecated it. It was said everywhere that the President should have taken action already.

And some weeks later the great moment came. I shall never forget the superb firmness with which it was faced. And above all never, never will pass out of my memory the grandiose, moving, compelling manifestation with which Gen. Joffre at the head of the French Commission was received in May.

It may be said that the sky was hidden by flags. On more than ten kilometres of the streets in New York along the route of the procession were millions of people roaring and enthusiastic. Joffre passed as if in a triumphal dream, without even taking the pains to conceal the tears which flowed from his eyes.

It was the great spirit of Washington which from the tomb was animating that of the American people. It was the Nation grown great and powerful in population and wealth, which 130 years later, recalling the benefit and aid received from France, was anxious to reciprocate. It was the generous soul of a people whom affairs had tempered but had not dried up, which was approaching the Victor of the Marne to say to him with the immense voice of the multitude: « Your Lafayette brought us his knightly soul and 4,000 men, and we are here with our fraternal solidarity prepared to send thousand times as many, little by little as we shall be able to collect them, ready to send you all the arms which we shall be able to forge ».

On that day the Teutonic theory of historic materialism received a fierce blow. And from that day dates

the pledge of the mass of the American people to fight to the last.

General Pershing, who commands the American troops on the French Front, and to whose generous initiative it is due if one hundred thousand Americans are to-day in the first line on the French Front, mingled fraternally with the other allied troops, with the war-like optimism of his nation, has outlined this clear war program :

*« Germany can be beaten,  
Germany must be beaten,  
Germany will be beaten ».*

It has been to Germany's interest to hasten events, and she is attempting the decisive blow before American aid may be in a full state of efficiency. These are days of quivering expectation.

However, although still incomplete, the aid of America has been precious up till now. Besides the material strength which she has brought to the Allies in the field of finance, of supplies of every sort, of maritime transports, to which have been added the first military contingents, she has brought them this incalculable moral benefit: the full and solemn recognition of the just cause for which they are valorously fighting.

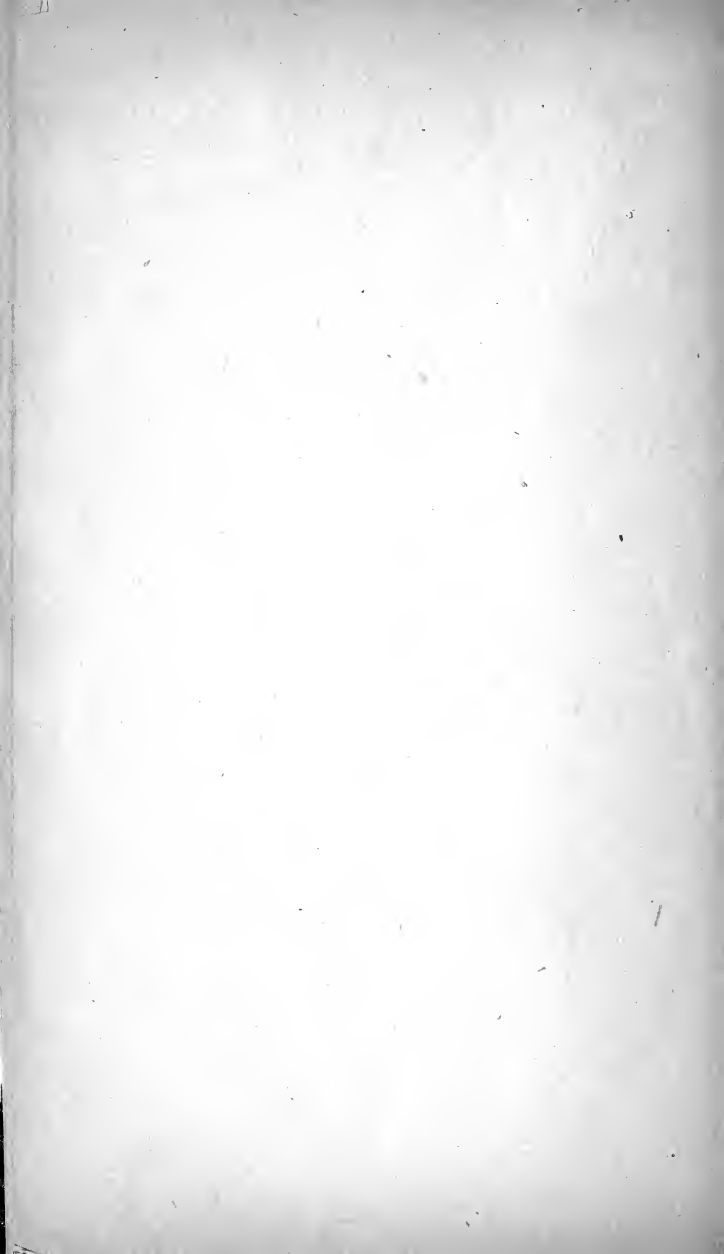
The re-affirmation of the intentions of Wilson, expressed in a letter sent on the 25th day of March to Bishop Henderson of the American Methodist Church, is now history: « The German power is a thing without conscience and without honour, unworthy of a peace based on agreements, and must be crushed. At this time our immediate duty is to win the War, and nothing can shake us from this purpose until it is an accomplished fact ».

It is necessary that these too may be our thought and our determination. We are in a supreme hour. It is

necessary to work and hope, dominating our weaknesses and our anxieties.

We are like Alpine climbers smitten by snow-fever: He who stops, who is beaten down, dies. And we must live, live obstinately, because we can give to the world, as we have always given, prodigally, light of genius and civilization.

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